



# Wyoming Game and Fish Department

## Pinedale Region

## July 2017 Newsletter



### Wyoming Range Mule Deer Initiative

Pinedale Habitat Biologist Jill Randall is continuing her work with several partners to implement the Wyoming Range Mule Deer Habitat Project. As part of that multi-year effort, a 200-acre prescribed fire was completed by the BLM on the east slope of Wyoming Range near Pine Grove west of Big Piney. This is the second aspen unit burned (Miller Mountain in 2016) as part of a string of Wyoming Range mule deer treatments initiated in 2014. Additional burns are slated for the same area later this fall. In total, there will be nearly 10,000 acres of aspen treated over the next five years. Conifer trees are cut and left for two years prior to create additional fuel to take out standing conifer trees that are overtaking aspen stands.



*A Prescribed burn conducted in the Wyoming Range west of Big Piney designed to remove conifer trees and promote aspen.*



All treatments will target winter, transitional and summer range habitat for mule deer in the Big Piney-LaBarge area as a part of the Wyoming Range Mule Deer Initiative. Managers plan to treat over 30,000 acres over the next several years to improve sagebrush, mountain

shrubs and aspen communities. In addition, approximately 2,000 acres of cheatgrass will be sprayed with herbicide annually to improve overall range conditions and ensure success of the other treatments. Funding partners, to date, include WY Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust, WY Landscape Conservation Initiative, WY Game and Fish, WY Governor's Big Game License Coalition, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Mule Fanatics Foundation, Mule Deer Foundation, Denbury, Exxon and BLM.

*Above: George Jensen with the BLM helps ignite a wall of flames near Pine Grove on the east slope of the Wyoming Range. (Right) A conifer goes up in flames. Managers expect a flush of aspen and forbs to come back benefitting mule deer and other wildlife species.*







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Pinedale Fisheries Technician Kole Stewart holds up a hefty 20 pound lake trout netted from Green River Lake before releasing it. Photo by Darren Rhea

## Summer Fish Surveys Begin

Fish managers for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department typically start their field season surveying regional lakes while waiting for streams and rivers to recede and clear up. The Pinedale Fisheries crew began their summer field season sampling fish populations at both Green River Lake and New Fork Lake. All the “finger” lakes on the west slope of the Wind River Range are on a three-year rotation for sampling.

“All the lakes are unique in their own way and support unique fisheries,” says Pinedale Fish Biologist Darren Rhea. “Green River Lake has one of the strongest rainbow populations and now supports a decent kokanee fishery. The lake trout suffer from skewed size distribution, which is dominated by fish less than 20 inches. New Fork lake has a much more uniform lake trout population and decent kokanee fishery, which also serves as a brood source so they are intensively scrutinized. Unfortunately, they have been subject to some less than ideal spawning conditions in recent years and have under-performed expectations.”

(Left) The Pinedale fish crew pulling in nets at Green River Lake in June. (Below Left) One of several kokanee salmon netted in Green River Lake. (Below) Pinedale Fisheries Technician Colter Brown weighs a nice rainbow trout captured at Green River Lake.







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## Pinedale's "Camp Wild" a Hit!

Pinedale Aquatic Habitat Biologist Luke Schulz and Pinedale Fish Supervisor Hilda Sexauer teamed up with Game and Fish conservation educators from Cheyenne to hold a three-day outdoor day camp for kids in Pinedale. This new summer camp, called "Camp Wild", is being offered to students entering 5th and 6th grade in several towns across Wyoming this summer.

The Pinedale Camp Wild included fishing, archery and hands-on learning about wildlife, habitats, aquatic ecology, navigation, basic survival and team building. Any kids interested in these types of outdoor skills can learn more about it on the Game and Fish website at: <https://goo.gl/qltVSy> and should be on the lookout for a camp near them again next summer.







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### WY Range Mule Deer Fawn Study Continues

Game and Fish personnel from both the Jackson and Pinedale regions joined researchers from the Wyoming Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit to continue Phase II of the Wyoming Range Mule Deer Study looking at fawn survival. This is the third field season for the study with the following statistics:

**2015**  
Tracked the fate of 58 animals (including 3 stillborns)  
45% died in the summer  
Median birthdate was 6/10/2015  
Average weight 3.79

**2016**  
Tracked the fate of 70 animals (including 7 stillborns)  
56% died in the summer  
Median birthdate was 6/13/2017  
Average weight 3.80

**2017 (so far)**  
Tracked the fate of 65 animals (including 7 stillborns)  
34% died so far  
Median birthdate was 6/14/2017 (still waiting on three does to give birth, so median date may shift back a few days)  
Average weight 3.29



Several causes of death have been identified, impacting fawn survival to a varying degree each year, including: disease, malnutrition, predation, physical injury, still born and the cause some mortalities were simply unknown. In 2015, disease seemed to be a fairly significant factor. In 2016, predation played more of a factor, but all of the identified-causes of death played a role each year.

Both Phase I & Phase II of the Wyoming Range Mule Deer Project were initiated to address research and management needs identified in the Wyoming Range Mule Deer Initiative. Habitat and predation were key topics identified during the public input process of the initiative and understanding their relationship to fawn survival and overall recruitment will aid managers in developing strategies to encourage population growth.

(Left) Melodie Edwards, with WY Public Radio measures a deer fawn with help from Samantha Dwinell from the WY Cooperative Fish & Wildlife Research Unit, while Game & Fish Wildlife Biologist Gary Fralick records the data. (Below) Both Dwinell and Fralick provided on-site radio interviews. Photos by Mark Thonhoff, BLM.







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## From the Front Desk...

Pinedale Game & Fish office managers Lori Johnson and Kristen Draney get to hear all the stories from local anglers and they are reporting that fishing in the Pinedale Region is great! Lakes have been fishing good ever since ice-off and after an epic snow/run-off season, local streams have finally cleared enough for some great fishing there as well. They also encourage everyone to get out there and get their Cutt slam certificate by catching all four of Wyoming's native cutthroats. They can all be caught within a relatively short drive here in the western part of the state. To learn more about the Cutt slam visit the Game & Fish website at: <https://wgfd.wyo.gov/Fishing-and-Boating/Cutt-Slam>



## Nice Find

Big Piney Game Warden Adam Hymas reports that one lucky individual came across this rare find of a trophy big horn sheep that had died this past winter in the Wyoming Range west of Big Piney.



## Halfmoon Bloom

South Pinedale Game Warden Jordan Kraft passed along this sweet shot of arrowleaf balsam-root covering the hillsides at the Half Moon Mountain Wildlife Habitat Management Area east of Pinedale this spring.